

First in Line in West Virginia

Webster County High School in Uppergrade, W. Va., is the first school in West Virginia to “go Geo” and has — in just eight months — realized energy costs savings of more than \$34,000 and cut its electrical demand nearly in half.

In 1997 the Webster County Board of Education requested funds from the School Board Authority (SBA) of West Virginia to replace several rooftop heating units at Webster County High School. Upon inspection, SBA officials recognized that restoring the existing electrical HVAC system wasn't the best solution. They recommended a qualified mechanical engineering firm review the system and develop better options.



Drilling for the ground loop for Webster County High School's 500-ton GeoExchange system. It is the largest GeoExchange installation to date in West Virginia and the surrounding region.

School officials were leaning towards a propane gas heating system when Allegheny Power, Greensburg, PA, and ZDS Design/Consulting Services, St. Albans, WV, introduced them to GeoExchange, which could provide greater energy efficiency, cost savings, temperature control, reliability and safety.

Webster's 500-ton system is the largest GeoExchange installation to date in West Virginia and the surrounding region. School officials estimate that the system will save about \$50,000 a year in heating and cooling costs. In addition, it provides a healthier environment for Webster's 600 students, its faculty and staff by incorporating a cost-effective, outside air ventilation system.

“We're very pleased with the system,” said Harry Given, facilities manager for Webster County schools. “We've seen energy savings, had zero maintenance problems, and we believe that the savings will be even greater over time.”

Investing in the Future

“GeoExchange offers schools the best return on investment with the lowest environmental impact,” said Gary Valli, an HVAC engineer with Allegheny Power. “In most cases, the life-cycle costs of a geothermal heat pump system are lower than any other system available today.”

The Geothermal Heat Pump Consortium (GHPC) helped Webster County school officials by providing additional training to ZDS through its Design Assistance Program. “We were not sure how comfortable the school personnel would be with this type of system,” said Todd Zachwieja, owner of ZDS. “A commercial geothermal system of this size had never been installed in our area, and the system cost was higher than HVAC systems customarily funded for schools.”

The Webster County project was funded as a pilot project through a \$3.25 million grant from the SBA, which is responsible for overseeing all school construction in the state. The SBA is giving strong consideration to the GeoExchange system's positive performance at the school, Zachwieja noted.

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Significant lifecycle cost savings could allow more schools to benefit from funding for GeoExchange projects in the future.

Improved Comfort and Efficiency

The Webster County High School system includes 240 vertical loop heat exchangers inserted 304 feet into the ground. The new units that replaced the old multizone units incorporate exhaust air heat recovery for the incoming outdoor air. "That's another benefit of the system — bringing the outdoor air indoors," Given said. "We've improved our indoor air quality; everyone appreciates that."

"Schools are definitely realizing the benefits of GeoExchange for comfort and energy-efficiency," Valli said. To help, Allegheny Power is producing a technically detailed video on the step-by-step GeoExchange installation at the Webster County High School.

"Many schools have HVAC systems that are reaching the end of their useful life," Valli said. "These schools will look at a lot of options. Our job is to educate the decision-makers that GeoExchange is a viable and cost effective solution." •

Thoughts from Conn Abnee

Today, GeoExchange systems are cutting energy costs by 25 to 40 percent at more than 500 schools and colleges nationwide. As part of our goal to build market knowledge of GeoExchange, the GHPC is moving forward with an aggressive communications program for the national school market.

An advertisement is running seven times in premium school-oriented magazines while a direct mail program will target 40,000 people who are directly involved in recommending, installing and analyzing HVAC needs for schools.

Readers who request more information from the ads and direct mail literature will receive our new school information kit, which offers the brochure, "GeoExchange, The Best Course to Energy Savings for Schools and Universities," the "Smart Choice for Schools" cost projection software on CD-ROM, and a video describing successful school applications of GeoExchange.

And, to offer early leads to schools with planned HVAC projects, the school construction alert in the "Members Only" section of our web site provides a listing of nationwide projects. The site lists all necessary contact information for each school as well as the size of the project. Combined with our public relations program, we expect these efforts will help further increase the use of GeoExchange in schools. •



As the GHPC's executive director, Conn Abnee discusses the trends and forces shaping the GeoExchange industry.

New Publications Help Promote GeoExchange

Over the past few months you may have noticed a new look on GHPC's marketing materials. All segment kits, selected brochures and even GHPC's tradeshow booth and web site (www.geoexchange.org) reflect our new image.

GHPC also plans to distribute new information for the health, hotel and government markets. The GeoExchange for Health Care Facilities segment kit (SK-06) includes a new video on healthcare facilities as well as case studies for both assisted living facilities and hospitals. GeoExchange for Hotels (SK-07) includes a new video that highlights several hotels, along with case studies and a brochure.

A new GHPC information kit, GeoExchange in Federal Facilities (SK-08), will also include both a video and full-color brochure explaining how facilities can save money and reduce greenhouse gas emissions with GeoExchange. For those interested in learning how GeoExchange can be used in visitor centers, GHPC offers a video showcasing the Mohonk Preserve Trapps Gateway Center in New Paltz, NY (VT-910).

To order any of these materials or any of our other 250 publications, please call the GeoExchange Information Center at 1-888-ALL-4-GEO (1-888-255-4436). •



Earth Comfort Update

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701 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
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